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Translation Glossaries

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The use of a glossary can streamline and provide consistent quality in the translation of informed consent forms and other clinical research documents.

One of ways to build a glossary is to extract translations from documents that have already been properly translated. Where multiple translations are found, experts can choose the best one or the glossary can allow alternate translations, with an explanation of where each translation is preferred, when appropriate.

Since translation issues are not confined to single words, your glossary should also include phrases, sentences and perhaps even full paragraphs. (In this article, a "glossary" includes single terms, phrases and other language parts.) Certain countries even have style-sheet standards for fonts, font sizes, and other formatting.

Validate translations for inclusion in your glossary with the standard process of forward translation, back translation, third-party review, and final selection. A native-language speaker and someone familiar with clinical research — preferably the same person— should be involved.

If a country already has a list of accepted translations, include those in your glossary, possibly along with any alternate translations, well explained.

Once your glossary exists, your translators should rely on it. However, if they wish to deviate from the glossary, perhaps because there is a less technical word, it might be an opportunity to expand or refine the glossary.

You can also use your glossary to assess the quality of a translation firm. Ask the firm to explain the basis for any translations that differ from those in your glossary.

Ideally, the clinical research enterprise should collaborate to create a single glossary for everyone to use.

The spreadsheet at www.firstclinical.com/journal/2015/Translation_Glossary.xls presents translations of 20 common clinical research terms — Adverse Event, (Study) Arm, Blind Study, Blood Pressure, Body Mass Index (BMI), (Medical) Condition, Control (Group), Comparator, Disease, Dosage, Experimental, Gene, Informed Consent, Medication, (Science of) Medicine, Placebo, Privacy/Confidentiality, Risk, Side Effect, and Treatment — from American English into 20 other languages: Arabic, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai and Turkish.

Reference

"CMDh Best Practice Guide for the translation of the SmPC, PIL and Labelling," Coordination Group for Mutual Recognition and Decentralised Procedures-Human Medicines, http://www.novalins.com/2013/11/cmdh-best-practice-guide-for-the-translation-of-the-smpc-pil-and-labelling/.

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